HELGAKVITHA HJORVARTHSSONAR

The Lay of Helgi the Son of Hjorvarth

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

The three Helgi lays, all found in the *Codex Regius*, have been the subjects of a vast amount of discussion, in spite of which many of the facts regarding them are still very far from settled. It is, indeed, scarcely possible to make any unqualified statement regarding these three poems for which a flat contradiction cannot be found in the writings of some scholar of distinction. The origin of the Helgi tradition, its connection with that of Sigurth, the authorship, date and home of the poems, the degree to which they have been altered from their original forms, the status of the composer of the copious prose notes: these and many other allied questions have been and probably always will be matters of dispute among students of the *Edda's* history.

Without attempting to enter into the discussion in detail, certain theories should be noted. Helgi appears originally to have been a Danish popular hero, the son of King Halfdan. Saxo Grammaticus has a good deal to say about him in that capacity, and it has been pointed out that many of the place names in the Helgi lays can be pretty clearly identified with parts of Denmark and neighboring stretches of the Baltic. The Danish Helgi, according to Saxo, was famed as the conqueror of Hunding and Hothbrodd, the latter as the result of a naval expedition at the head of a considerable fleet.

From Denmark the story appears to have spread northward into Norway and westward into the Norse settlements among the islands. Not many of its original features remained, and new ones were added here and there, particularly with regard to Helgi's love affair with Sigrun. The victories over Hunding and Hothbrodd, however, were generally retained, and out of material relating to these two fights, and to the Helgi-Sigrun story, were fashioned the two lays of Helgi Hundingsbane.

How the Helgi legend became involved with that of the Volsungs is an open question. Both stories travelled from the South, and presumably about the same time, so it is not unnatural

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that some confusion should have arisen. At no time, however, was the connection particularly close so far as the actual episodes of the two stories were concerned. In the two lays of Helgi Hundingsbane the relationship is established only by the statement that Helgi was the son of Sigmund and Borghild; Sigurth is not mentioned, and in the lay of Helgi the son of Hjorvarth there is no connection at all. On the other hand, Helgi does not appear in any of the Eddic poems dealing directly with the Volsung stories, although in one passage of doubtful authenticity (cf. *Reginsmol*, introductory note) his traditional

enemy, Hunding, does, represented by his sons. In the *Volsungasaga* the story of Helgi, including the fights with Hunding and Hothbrodd and the love affair with Sigrun, is told in chapters 8 and 9 without otherwise affecting the course of the narrative. Here, as in the Helgi lays, Helgi is the son of Sigmund Volsungsson and Borghild; Sigurth, on the other hand, is the son of Sigmund and Hjordis, the latter being the daughter of King Eylimi. Still another son, who complicates both stories somewhat, is Sinfjotli, son of Sigmund and his own sister, Signy. Sinfjotli appears in both of the Helgi Hundingsbane lays and in the *Volsungasaga*, but not in any of the Eddic poems belonging to the Volsung cycle (cf. *Fra Dautha Sinfjotla* and note).

There is a certain amount of resemblance between the story of Helgi and Sigrun and that of Sigurth and Brynhild, particularly as the annotator responsible for the prose notes insists that Sigrun was a Valkyrie. Whether this resemblance was the cause of bringing the two stories together, or whether the identification of Helgi as Sigmund's son resulted in alterations of the love story in the Helgi poems, cannot be determined. The first of the three Helgi poems, the lay of Helgi the son of Hjorvarth, is a somewhat distant cousin of the other two. The Helgi in question is apparently the same traditional figure, and he leads a naval expedition, but he is not the son of Sigmund, there is no connection with the Volsung cycle, and his wife is Svava, not Sigrun. At the same time, the points of general resemblance with the two Helgi Hundingsbane lays are such as to indicate a common origin, provided one goes far enough back. The annotator brings the stories together by the naive expedient of having Helgi "born again," and not once only, but twice.

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The first Helgi lay, is manifestly in bad shape, and includes at least two distinct poems, differentiated not only by subject matter but by metrical form. Although the question is debatable, the longer of these poems (stanzas 1-11 and 31-43) seems in turn to have been compounded out of fragments of two or more Helgi poems. The first five stanzas are a dialogue between a bird and Atli, one of Hjorvarth's followers, concerning the winning of Sigrlin, who is destined to be Hjorvarth's wife and Helgi's mother. Stanzas 6-11 are a dialogue between Helgi and a Valkyrie (the accompanying prose so calls her, and identifies her as Svava, but there is nothing in the verse to prove this). Stanzas 12-30 form a fairly consecutive unit, in which Atli, on guard over Helgi's ship, has a vigorous argument with a giantess, Hrimgerth, whence this section has sometimes been called the *Hrimgertharmol* (*Lay of Hrimgerth*). The last section, stanzas 31-43, is, again fairly consecutive, and tells of the death of Helgi following the rash oath of his brother, Hethin, to win Svava for himself.

Parts I, II, and IV may all have come from the same poem or they may not; it is quite impossible to tell surely. All of them are generally dated by commentators not later than the first half of the tenth century, whereas the *Hrimgertharmol* (section III) is placed considerably later. When and by whom these fragments were pieced together is another vexed question, and this involves a consideration of the prose notes and links, of which the *Helgakvitha Hjorvarthssonar* has a larger amount than any other poem in the *Edda*.

These prose links contain practically all the narrative, the verse being almost exclusively dialogue. Whoever composed them seems to have been consciously trying to bring his chaotic verse material into some semblance of unity, but he did his work pretty clumsily, with manifest blunders and contradictions. Bugge has advanced the theory that these prose passages are to be regarded as an original and necessary part of the work, but this hardly squares with the evidence.

It seems probable, rather, that as the Helgi tradition spread from its native Denmark through the Norse regions of the North and West, and became gradually interwoven, although not in essentials, with the other great hero cycle from the South, that of the Volsungs, a considerable number of poems dealing with Helgi were composed, at different times and in different places,

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reflecting varied forms of the story. Many generations after wards, when Iceland's literary period had arrived, some zealous scribe committed to writing such poems or fragments of poems as he knew, piecing them together and annotating them on the basis of information which had reached him through other channels. The prose notes to *Helgakvitha Hundingsbana II* frankly admit this patchwork process: a section of four stanzas (13-16) is introduced with the phrase, "as is said in the Old Volsung Lay"; the final prose note cites an incident "told in the *Karuljoth* (*Lay of Kara*)," and a two-line speech is quoted "as it was written before in the *Helgakvitha*."

The whole problem of the origin, character and home of the Helgi poems has been discussed in great detail by Bugge in his *Helge-Digtene i den Ældre Edda, Deres Hjem og Forbindelser*, which, as translated by W. H. Schofield under the title *The Home of the Eddic Poems*, is available for readers of English. This study is exceedingly valuable, if not in all respects convincing. The whole matter is so complex and so important in the history of Old Norse literature, and any intelligent reading of the Helgi poems is so dependent on an understanding of the conditions under which they have come down to us, that I have here discussed the question more extensively than the scope of a mere introductory note to a single poem would warrant.

(I)

OF HJORVARTH AND SIGRLIN

Hjorvarth was the name of a king, who had four wives: one was called Alfhild, and their son was named Hethin; the second was called Særeith, and their son was named Humlung; the third was called Sinrjoth, and their son was

[*Prose*: In the manuscript the sub-title, "Of Hjorvarth and Sigrlin," stands as the title for the whole poem, though it clearly applies only to the first five stanzas. Most editions employ the title here given. *Hjorvarth*: the name is a not uncommon one; {footnote p. 273} there are two men of that name mentioned in the mythical heroic genealogies of the *Hyndluljoth* (stanzas 23 and 28), and Hjorvarth appears in *Helgakvitha Hundingsbana* I (stanza 14) and II (prose after stanza 12) as a son of Hunding. This particular Hjorvarth is

called by the annotator, but not directly so in the verse, a king of Norway. The name means "Sword-Guardian." *Four wives*: polygamy, while very. infrequent, appears occasionally in the Norse sagas. *Alfhild*: "Elf-Warrior." *Hethin*: "Fur-Clothed" (?). *Særeith*: "Sea-Rider." *Sinrjoth*: "Ever-Red." The fourth wife, not here named, may be Sigrlin. It has been suggested that Særeith and Sinrjoth may be northern and southern forms of the same name, as also *Humlung* and *Hymling*, their sons. *Svafnir*: the annotator calls him king of Svavaland, apparently a place on the mainland which could be reached from Norway either by land or by sea. *Sigrlin*: "The Conquering Serpent." *Atli*: Norse form of the Gothic Attila (Etzel). *Alof*: perhaps a feminine form of Olaf. *A bird*: compare the counsel given by the birds to Sigurth after the slaying of Fafnir (Fafnismol, stanzas 32-38). This is one of the many curious resemblances between the Helgi and the Sigurth stories.]

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named Hymling. King Hjorvarth had made a great vow to have as wife whatsoever woman he knew was fairest. He learned that King Svafnir had a daughter fairer than all others, whose name was Sigrlin. Ithmund was the name of one of his jarls; he had a son called Atli, who went to woo Sigrlin on behalf of the king. He dwelt the winter long with King Svafnir. There was a jarl called Franmar, Sigrlin's foster-father; his daughter was named Alof. The jarl told him that the maiden's hand was denied, and Atli went home. Atli, the jarl's son, stood one day in a certain wood; a bird sat in the branches up over him, and it had heard that his men called Hjorvarth's wives the fairest of women. The bird twittered, and Atli hearkened to what it spoke. It said:

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1. "Sawest thou Sigrlin, | Svafnir's daughter,
The fairest maid | in her home-land found?
Though Hjorvath's wives | by men are held
Goodly to see | in Glasir's wood."

Atli spake:
2. "Now with Atli, | Ithmund's son,
Wilt thou say more, | thou bird so wise?"

The bird spake:
"I may if the prince | an offering makes,
And I have what I will | from the house of the king."

Atli spake:
3. "Choose not Hjorvarth, | nor sons of his,
Nor the wives so fair | of the famous chief;
Ask not the brides | that the prince's are;
Fair let us deal | in friendly wise."

The bird spake:
4. "A fane will I ask, | and altars many,
Gold-horned cattle | the prince shall give me,

If Sigrlin yet | shall sleep in his arms,
Or free of will | the hero shall follow."

[1. *Glasir's wood*: Snorri in the *Skaldskaparmal* quotes a half stanza to the effect that "Glasir stands with golden leaves before Othin's hall," and calls it "the fairest wood among gods and men." The phrase as used here seems to mean little.

4. The bird's demands would indicate that it is in reality one of the gods. *Gold-horned cattle*: cf. *Thrymskvitha*, 23. There {footnote p. 275} are other references to gilding the horns of cattle, particularly for sacrificial purposes.]

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This was before Atli went on his journey; but when he came home, and the king asked his tidings, he said:

5. "Trouble we had, | but tidings none,
Our horses failed | in the mountains high,
The waters of Sæmorn | we needs must wade;
Svafnir's daughter, | with rings bedecked,
She whom we sought, | was still denied us."

The king bade that they should go another time, and he went with them himself, But when they came up on the mountain, they saw Svavaland burning and mighty dust-clouds from many steeds. The king rode from the mountain forward into the land, and made a night's stay hard by a stream. Atli kept watch and went over the stream; he found there a house. A great bird sat on the housetop to guard it, but he was asleep. Atli hurled his spear at the bird and slew it, and in the house he found Sigrlin the king's daughter and Alof the jarl's daughter, and he brought them both thence with him. Jarl Franmar had changed himself into the likeness of an eagle, and guarded them from the enemy host by magic. Hrothmar was the name of a king, a wooer of Sigrlin; he slew the

[*Prose*. The annotator contradicts himself here, as he had already stated that Atli was on his way home.

5. Possibly the remains of two stanzas, or perhaps a line has been added. *Sæmorn*: this river is nowhere else mentioned.

Prose. Sigrlin and Alof, protected by the latter's father, Franmar, have fled before the ravaging army of Sigrlin's rejected {footnote p. 276} suitor, Hrothmar. The beginning of a new section (II) is indicated in the manuscript only by the unusually large capital letter with which "Hjorvarth" begins. *No name*, etc.: this probably means that Helgi had always been so silent that he would answer to no name, with the result that he had none. *Valkyries*: cf. *Voluspo*, 31 and note. The annotator insists here and in the prose after stanza 9 that Svava was a Valkyrie, but there is nothing in the verse to prove it, or, indeed, to identify the Svava of the last section of the poem with the person who gave Helgi his name. In the *Volsungasaga* Sigmund himself names his son Helgi, and gives him a sword, following Helgakvitha *Hundingsbana* I.]

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king of Svavaland and had plundered and burned his land. King Hjorvarth took Sigrlin, and Atli took Alof.

(II)

Hjorvarth and Sigrlin had a son, mighty and of noble stature; he was a silent man, and no name stuck fast to him. He sat on a hill, and saw nine Valkyries riding; one of them was the fairest of all. She spake:

6. "Late wilt thou, Helgi, | have hoard of rings,
Thou battle-tree fierce, | or of shining fields,--
The eagle screams soon,-- | if never thou speakest,
Though, hero, hard | thy heart may cry."

Helgi spake:
7. "What gift shall I have | with Helgi's name,
Glorious maid, | for the giving is thine?

[6. *Battle-free*: poetic phrase for "warrior." *Shining fields*: the words in the manuscript may form a proper name, Rothulsvoll, having this meaning.

7. *Gift*: not only was it customary to give gifts with the naming {footnote p. 276} of a child, but the practice frequently obtained when a permanent epithet was added to the name of an adult.]

All thy words | shall I think on well,
But I want them not | if I win not thee."

The Valkyrie spake:
8. "Swords I know lying | in Sigarsholm,
Fifty there are | save only four;
One there is | that is best of all,
The shield-destroyer, | with gold it shines.

9. "In the hilt is fame, | in the haft is courage,
In the point is fear, | for its owner's foes;
On the blade there lies | a blood-flecked snake,
And a serpent's tail | round the flat is twisted."

Eylimi was the name of a king, whose daughter was Svava; she was a Valkyrie, and rode air and sea. She gave Helgi this name, and shielded him oft thereafter in battle. Helgi spake:

10. "Hjorvarth, king, | unwholesome thy counsels,
Though famed thou art | in leading the folk,

[8. *Sigarsholm* ("Isle of Sigar"): a place not identified, but probably related to the Sigarsvoll where Helgi was slain (stanza 35).

9. The sword is carved with magic runes and with snakes. *Fame*: the original word is uncertain.

Prose. *Eylimi*: this name is another link with the Sigurth story, as it is likewise the name of the father of Sigurth's mother, Hjordis.

10. With this stanza begins a new episode, that of Helgi's {footnote p. 277} victory over King Hrothmar, who had killed his mother's father (cf. prose after stanza 5). It has been suggested, in consequence, that stanzas 10-11 may be a separate fragment. The verse tells nothing of the battle, merely giving Helgi's reproaches to his father for having left Svafnir's death and the burning of Svavaland unavenged.]

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Letting fire the homes of heroes eat,
Who evil deed had never done thee.

11. "Yet Hrothmar still the hoard doth hold,
The wealth that once our kinsmen wielded;
Full seldom care the king disturbs,
Heir to dead men he deems himself."

Hjorvarth answered that he would give Helgi a following if he fain would avenge his mother's father. Then Helgi got the sword that Svava had told him of. So he went, and Atli with him, and they slew Hrothmar, and they did many great deeds.

(III)

He slew the giant Hati, whom he found sitting on a certain mountain. Helgi and Atli lay with their ships in Hatafjord. Atli kept watch during the first part of the night. Hrimgerth, Hati's daughter, spake:

12. "Who are the heroes | in Hatafjord?
The ships are covered with shields;

[*Prose*. The manuscript does not indicate any break, but the episode which forms the basis of the *Hrimgertharmol* (stanzas 12-30) clearly begins with the slaying of the giant Hati ("The Hateful"). *Hatafjord*: "Hati's Fjord." *Hrimgerth*: "Frost Shrouded"]

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Bravely ye look, | and little ye fear,
The name of the king would I know."

Atli spake:
13. "Helgi his name, | and never thou mayst
Harm to the hero bring;
With iron is fitted | the prince's fleet,
Nor can witches work us ill."

Hrimgerth spake:
14. "Who now, thou mighty | man, art thou?
By what name art thou known to men?
He trusts thee well, | the prince who wills
That thou stand at the stem of his ship."

Atli spake:
15. "Atli am I, | and ill shalt thou find me,
Great hate for witches I have;
Oft have I been | in the dripping bows,
And to dusk-riders death have brought.

16. "Corpse-hungry giantess, | how art thou called?
Say, witch, who thy father was!

[13. *Iron*: the keels of Norse ships were sometimes fitted with iron "shoes" at bow and stern, but it is not certain that this practice much antedated the year 1000, and thus this line has raised some question as to the antiquity of this stanza, if not of the entire *Hrimgertharmol*, which may have been composed as late as the eleventh century.

15. The manuscript does not indicate the speaker. The pun on "Atli" and "atall" (meaning "ill") is untranslatable.]

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Nine miles deeper | down mayst thou sink,
And a tree grow tall on thy bosom."

Hrimgerth spake:
17. "Hrimgerth am I, | my father was Hati,
Of giants the most in might;
Many a woman | he won from her home,
Ere Helgi hewed him down."

Atli spake:
18. "Witch, in front | of the ship thou wast,
And lay before the fjord;
To Ron wouldst have given | the ruler's men,
If a spear had not stuck in thy flesh."

Hrimgerth spake:
19. "Dull art thou, Atli, | thou dreamest, methinks,
The lids lie over thine eyes;
By the leader's ships | my mother lay,
Hlothvarth's sons on the sea I slew.

[17. The manuscript does not indicate the speaker.

18. From this point to the end the manuscript does not indicate the speakers. *Ron*: wife of the sea-god Ægir, who draws drowning men into the sea with her net. There is no other reference to the wounding of Hrimgerth.

19. Apparently both Hrimgerth and her mother, Hati's wife, had sought to destroy Helgi's ships, and had actually killed some of his companions, the sons of *Hlothvarth*, concerning whom nothing more is known. Many editors assume that a stanza containing a speech by Atli has been lost after stanza 19.]

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20. "Thou wouldst neigh, Atli, | but gelded thou art,
See, Hrimgerth hoists her tail;
In thy hinder end | is thy heart, methinks,
Though thy speech is a stallion's cry."

Atli spake:
21. "A stallion I seem | if thou seekest to try me,
And I leap to land from the sea;
I shall smite thee to bits, | if so I will,
And heavy sinks Hrimgerth's tail."

Hrimgerth spake:
22. "Go ashore then, Atli, | if sure of thy might,
Let us come to Varin's cove;
Straight shall thy rounded | ribs be made
If thou comest within my claws."

Atli spake:
23. "I will not go | till the warriors wake,
Again their chief to guard;
I should wonder not, | foul witch, if up
From beneath our keel thou shouldst come."

Hrimgerth spake:
24. "Awake now, Helgi, | and Hrimgerth requite,
That Hati to death thou didst hew;

[20. Apparently Hrimgerth has assumed the form of a mare.

22. *Varin's cove*: the name of Varin appears twice in place names in *Helgakvitha Hundingsbana I* (stanzas 27 and 39). The sagas mention a mythical King Varin who lived at Skorustrond in Rogaland (Norway).]

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If a single night | she can sleep by the prince,
Then requited are all her ills."

Helgi spake:
25. " 'Tis Lothin shall have thee,-- | thou'rt loathsome to men,--
His home in Tholley he has;
Of the wild-dwellers worst | is the giant wise,
He is meet as a mate for thee."

Hrimgerth spake:
26. "More thou lovest her | who scanned the harbor,
Last night among the men;
(The gold-decked maid | bore magic, rnethinks,
When the land from the sea she sought,
And fast she kept your fleet;)
She alone is to blame | that I may not bring
Death to the monarch's men."

Helgi spake:
27. "Hrimgerth, mark, | if thy hurts I requite,
Tell now the truth to the king;

[25. Of the giant *Lothin* ("The Shaggy") and his home in *Tholley* ("Pine Island") nothing is known. Cf. *Skirnismol*, 35.

26. Something is clearly wrong with this stanza, and the manuscript indicates line 6 as the beginning of a new one. Perhaps a line (between lines 4 and 5) has been lost, or perhaps the lines in parenthesis are interpolations. Hrimgerth here refers to Svava, or to the protectress with whom the annotator has identified her, as having saved Helgi and his, ships from the vengeance of the giantesses. In the original line 1 includes Helgi's name, which makes it metrically incorrect.]

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Was there one who the ships | of the warrior warded,
Or did many together go?"

Hrimgerth spake:
28. "Thrice nine there were, | but one rode first,
A helmed maid white of hue;
Their horses quivered, | there came from their manes
Dew in the dales so deep,
(Hail on the woods so high,
Thence men their harvest have,
But ill was the sight I saw.)"

Atli spake:
29. "Look eastward, Hrimgerth, | for Helgi has struck thee
Down with the runes of death;
Safe in harbor floats | the prince's fleet,
And safe are the monarch's men."

Helgi spake:
30. "It is day, Hrimgerth, | for Atli held thee
Till now thy life thou must lose;

[28. Again something is clearly wrong, and the last three lines look like interpolations, though some editors have tried to reconstruct two full stanzas. The passage suggests the identification of the Valkyries with the clouds.

29. Some editions give this speech to Helgi. *Eastward*: Atli and Helgi have held Hrimgerth in talk till sunrise, and the sun's rays turn her into stone. But dwarfs rather than giants were the victims of sunlight; cf. *Alvissmol*, stanzas 16 and 35.]

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As a harbor mark | men shall mock at thee,
Where in stone thou shalt ever stand."

(IV)

King Helgi was a mighty warrior. He came to King Eylimi and sought the hand of his daughter, Svava. Then Helgi and Svava exchanged vows, and greatly they loved each other. Svava was at home with her father, while Helgi was in the field; Svava was still a Valkyrie as before.

Hethin was at home with his father, King Hjorvarth, in Norway. Hethin was coming home alone from the forest one Yule-eve, and found a troll-woman; she rode

[30. Most editions give this stanza to Atli. With this the *Hrimgertharmol* ends, and after the next prose passage the meter reverts to that of the earlier sections.

Prose. The manuscript does not indicate a new section of the poem. *Eylimi*: cf. note on prose after stanza 9. *Valkyrie*: here, as before, the annotator has apparently nothing but his own imagination on which to base his statement. Svava in the ensuing stanzas certainly does not behave like a Valkyrie. *Norway*: the annotator doubtless based this statement on the reference to Norway in line 2 of stanza 31. *Yule-eve*: the Yule feast, marking the new year, was a great event in the heathen North. It was a time of feasting and merrymaking, vows ("New Year's resolutions"), ghosts and witches; the spirits had their greatest power on Yule-eve. *The king's toast*: vows made at the passing of the king's cup at the Yule feast were particularly sacred. *Sacred boar*: a boar consecrated to Freyr, an integral part of the Yule rites. Hethin's vow, which is, of course, the vengeance of the troll-woman, is too sacred to be broken, but he immediately realizes the horror of his oath.]

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on a wolf, and had snakes in place of a bridle. She asked Hethin for his company. "Nay," said he. She said, "Thou shalt pay for this at the king's toast." That evening the great vows were taken; the sacred boar was brought in, the men laid their hands thereon, and took their vows at the king's toast. Hethin vowed that he would have Svava, Eylimi's daughter, the beloved of his brother Helgi; then such great grief seized

him that he went forth on wild paths southward over the land, and found Helgi, his brother. Helgi said:

3 1. "Welcome, Hethin! | what hast thou to tell
Of tidings new | that from Norway come?
Wherefore didst leave | thy land, O prince,
And fared alone | to find us here?"

Hethin spake:
32. "A deed more evil | I have done
Than, brother mine, | thou e'er canst mend;
For I have chosen | the child of the king,
Thy bride, for mine | at the monarch's toast."

[31. *From Norway*: Bugge uses this phrase as evidence that the poem was composed in one of the Icelandic settlements of the western islands, but as the annotator himself seems to have thought that Hethin came to Helgi by land ("on wild paths southward"), this argument does not appear to have much weight.

32. The second line is conjectural; a line has; clearly been lost from this stanza, and various emendations have been suggested.]

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Helgi spake:
33. "Grieve not, Hethin, | for true shall hold
The words we both | by the beer have sworn;
To the isle a warrior | wills that I go,
(There shall I come | the third night hence;)
And doubtful must be | my coming back,
(So may all be well, | if fate so wills.)"

Hethin spake:
34. "Thou saidst once, Helgi, | that Hethin was
A friend full good, | and gifts didst give him;
More seemly it were | thy sword to redden,
Than friendship thus | to thy foe to-give."

Helgi spoke thus because he foresaw his death, for his following-spirits had met Hethin when he saw the woman riding on the wolf. Alf was the name of a king, the son of Hrothmar, who had marked out a battle-place with

[33. Perhaps this is the remnant of two stanzas, or perhaps two lines (probably the ones in parenthesis) have been interpolated. *The isle*: duels were commonly fought on islands, probably to guard against treacherous interference, whence the usual name for a duel was "isle-going." A duel was generally fought three days after the challenge. Reckoning the lapse of time by nights instead of days was a common practice throughout the German and Scandinavian peoples.

Prose. Some editors place all or part of this prose passage after stanza 35. *Following-spirits*: the "fylgja" was a female guardian spirit whose appearance generally betokened death. The belief was common throughout the North, and has come down to recent times in Scottish and Irish folk-lore. Individuals and sometimes whole families had these following-spirits, but it was most unusual for a person to have more than one of them. *Alf*: son of the Hrothmar who killed Helgi's grandfather, and {footnote p. 287} who was in turn later killed by Helgi. *Sigarsvoll* ("Sigar's Field"): cf. stanza 8 and note; the Sigar in question may be the man who appears as Helgi's messenger in stanzas 36-39.]

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Helgi at Sigarsvoll after a stay of three nights. Then Helgi spake:

35. "On a wolf there rode, | when dusk it was,
A woman who fain | would have him follow;
Well she knew | that now would fall
Sigrlin's son | at Sigarsvoll."

There was a great battle, and there Helgi got a mortal wound.

36. Sigar riding | did Helgi send
To seek out Eylimi's | only daughter:
"Bid her swiftly | ready to be,
If her lover | alive she would find."

Sigar spake:
37. "Hither now | has Helgi sent me,
With thee, Svava, | thyself to speak;
The hero said | he fain would see thee
Ere life the nobly | born should leave."

Svava spake:
A "What chanced with Helgi, | Hjorvarth's son?
Hard to me | is harm now come;
If the sea smote him, | or sword bit him,
Ill shall I bring | to all his foes."

[36. Sigar ("The Victorious"): cf. the foregoing note.]

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Sigar spake:
39. "In the morn he fell | at Frekastein,
The king who was noblest | beneath the sun;
Alf has the joy | of victory all,
Though need therefor | is never his."

Helgi spake:
40. "Hail to thee, Svava! | thy sorrow rule,

Our meeting last | in life is this;
Hard the wounds | of the hero bleed,
And close to my heart | the sword has come.

41. "I bid thee, Svava,-- | weep not, bride,--
If thou wilt hearken | to these my words,
The bed for Hethin | have thou ready,
And yield thy love | to the hero young."

Svava spake:
42. "A vow I had | in my dear-loved home,
When Helgi sought | with rings to have me,
That not of my will, | if the warrior died,
Would I fold in my arms | a man unfamed."

Hethin spake:
43. "Kiss me, Svava, | I come not back,

[39. *Frekastein* ("Wolf-Crag"): the name appears several times in the Helgi lays applied to battlefields; cf. *Helgakvitha Hundingsbana* I, 46 and 55, and II, 18 and 24. *Need*: i. e., Alf deserves no credit for the victory, which was due to the troll woman's magic.]

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Rogheim to see, | or Rothulsfjoll,
Till vengeance I have | for the son of Hjorvarth,
The king who was noblest | beneath the sun."

Of Helgi and Svava it is said that they were born again.

[41. One or two editors ascribe this stanza to Hethin.

43. A few editions make the extraordinary blunder of ascribing this speech to the dying Helgi. The point, of course, is that Hethin will satisfy Svava's vow by becoming famous as the slayer of Alf. *Rogheim* ("Rome of Battle") and *Rothulsfjoll* ("Sun-Mountain"): nowhere else mentioned; Hethin means simply that he will not come back to Svava till he has won fame.

Prose. Regarding this extraordinary bit see the prose note at the end of Helgakvitha *Hundingsbana II*. Gering thinks the reborn Helgi Hjorvarthsson was Helgi Hundingsbane, while Svava, according to the annotator himself, became Sigrun. The point seems to be simply that there were so many Helgi stories current, and the hero died in so many irreconcilable ways, that tradition had to have him born over again, not once only but several times, to accommodate his many deaths, and to avoid splitting him up into several Helgis. Needless to say, the poems themselves know nothing of this rebirth, and we owe the suggestion entirely to the annotator, who probably got it from current tradition.]

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